DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 309 SP 038 103

AUTHOR	Abebe, Solomon
TITLE	What Parents Know and Say about Student Teachers.
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	21p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Research (143)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Elementary Secondary Education; Higher Education; *Parent Attitudes; Preservice Teacher Education; Public Schools; *Student Teachers; Student Teaching; Students; Teacher Influence; Teacher Student Relationship

ABSTRACT

This study examined whether parents knew about student teachers assigned to teach their children in public school classrooms, noting their attitudes toward student teachers. Out of 39 student teachers' classrooms that participated, 16 were secondary, 3 were middle school, and 20 were elementary. Surveys examined whether parents perceived the presence of student teachers as a positive influence on their children; perceived student teachers as being properly trained to teach; viewed student teachers as positive role models; and believed that student teachers affected students attitudes and achievement. A total of 844 surveys went out to parents, and 331 were returned. Results indicated that children talked about student teachers at home. Although parents strongly suggested that student teachers needed to communicate better, they responded favorably to each question about student teachers. Parents said that student teachers positively influenced their children's learning experiences. They suggested that their children liked student teachers, student teachers had been fair to their children, and student teachers were good role models. The parents were aware of the preparation involved to train student teachers, and they said they would choose to have student teachers any time. However, they needed more information to help them decide if the improvements in achievement and attitude were attributable to the work and efforts of student teachers. (Contains 17 references.) (Author/SM)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

SP

ED 422 309

WHAT PARENTS KNOW AND SAY ABOUT STUDENT TEACHERS

by

Solomon Abebe

Dennis Middle School

Summer 1998

SP038103

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

S. Abebe

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☐ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

WHAT PARENTS KNOW AND SAY ABOUT STUDENT TEACHERS

ABSTRACT

In this study, parents indicated that their children talked about student teachers at home. Although parents strongly suggested that student teachers need to communicate better, they responded favorably to each question (except one) as identified by the indicators. Parents suggested that student teachers have been a positive influence on their children's learning experiences. Although the degree of influence was not identified, few of the many significant indicators show parents' perceptions were positive toward student teachers. Parents suggested that their children liked student teachers; student teachers have been fair to their children; student teachers are good role models; that they (parents) know and are aware of the preparation involved to train someone to be a teacher; and that they would choose to have student teachers any time. However, parents needed more information to help them decide if the improvements in achievement and attitude are attributable to the work and efforts of student teachers.

WHAT PARENTS KNOW AND SAY ABOUT STUDENT TEACHERS

At the dinner table at a good friend's house, Jason announced that a student teacher was teaching his algebra class. According to Jason, he did not understand the material being taught because the student teacher covered the material quickly and then gave the students some assignments to take home. Jason's mom responded excitedly, "You have a *student teacher* in class? What happened to Mr. Nichols? I am going to call Mrs. Houston (the principal) and find out what's going on." As the conversation continued, some important questions arose, questions that should be of concern for all teacher educators.

Parents, Children and Preservice Teachers

For most preservice teachers, the "rite of passage" into their chosen profession is the student teaching experience. Over thirty years ago, Conant (1963) described student teaching as "the one indisputable essential element in professional education" (p. 142). Turney (1992) described this experience as "the single most important interaction in a teacher professional preparation where student teachers put it all together under the supervision and guidance of significant other" (p. 34). Even today, student teaching is a requirement in all professional education programs in the undergraduate level. While much has been written about the role of the cooperating teacher, student teachers' perceptions and growth, and even university supervision, parents opinion of this experience has received far less attention.

Much of the literature review tends to portray student teaching as though it occurs in a laboratory-like setting where the only variables affecting student teaching are the school and university supervisors and the preservice teachers. Semester after semester, however, thousands of school-age children are affected in many ways by novices of varying degree of ability under varying qualities of supervision. Few studies have examined the preservice internships, and those that have been completed provide inconclusive results. Dockweiler and Erion (1983) and Franworth (1980) found that there was no significant effect on the achievement of learners after exposure to three student teachers. In an earlier study, Moffett (1969) concluded that learners taught by student teachers achieved success when those teachers taught to specific, agreed-upon instructional objectives. In contrast, Erwin (1983) and Denton and Morris (1981) determined that student teachers have a significant positive influence on learning achievement. Regardless of the effect on student learning, though, indications are that current trends in teacher education are likely to increase rather than decrease school children's exposure to preservice teachers.

In an unpublished doctoral dissertation on learners' opinions of student teachers, Erwin (1983) pointed out that pupils in that study indicated that student teachers certainly ve a positive influence on their experience. Of the respondents 64% said that student teachers kt class interesting; 77% stated that their student teachers stated the objectives clearly therelexpecting attention; 76% stated that their student teachers encouraged the learners to participain class discussion; 79% explain exactly what the learners were to do with the task; and 85%stated that their student teachers showed them how to do assignments. If these positive expences were shared to parents by the learners when they go home, parents would perceive stud teachers differntly.

Recent reports such as a Nation at Risk and the ongoing Gallup surveys leao the belief that the public is dissatisfied with existing teacher preparation programs and somevat insist upon the development of five-year teacher education programs, alternative certification, d professional development sites. These efforts shift emphasis from theoretical treatment of teacig in college classrooms to practical activities in early, on-going, and intensive field experiences the primary source of teacher education. Each field-based approach, when interpreted from a pspective of concern for the education of school children, may have potentially negative conseences. Five-year teacher education and alternative certification programs place into classroomsople who may have little or no previous experience with or concern for young children. With thgrowth of professional development site relationships, the possibility arises that a given chilnay have several undergraduate students and student teachers *every year* throughout his or r schooling.

Even though these preservice students may complete more hours in profesnal course work, they may lack maturity and life experiences that would enhance their abilitieo communicate effectively. Coupled with the concurrent emphasis on putting typica white middle class preservice teachers in unfamiliar and diverse urban settings and it is not diffit to understand why some teachers and parents are concerned about the potentially negve impact of too many student teachers (Quartavaro, 1984). Unlike some teachers and parentsno had

negative views of teachers and school, pupils tend to appreciate about their student teachers. Erwin (1983) found that 78% of learners indicated that student teachers encouraged them to assume responsibility for their learning, 82% indicated that they respect their student teachers, and 81% indicated that their student teachers set good examples for them. This is compelling evidence that student teachers are good role models in the eyes of their learners.

Academic achievement may not be the only concern parents have when their children are being taught by a student teacher. Franllin-Panek (1988) suggested that "parent-teacher relationships are complex and range from helpful to indifferent to hostile" and "can involve feeling of envy, competition, and mistrust" (p. 45). We can't necessarily conclude that the same is true of the student teacher-parent relationship. In the case of student teachers, minimal exposure and information about the temporary teachers might mean that parents have neither positive or negative attitudes toward student teachers. Perhaps they do not even know when a student teacher is assigned to teach their children or what the purpose of student teaching is.

Questions and Methodology

During 1994-95 school year, 844 surveys were sent to parents to elicit their perceptions of student teachers. The purpose was to determine if parents know about the activities of student teachers who are assigned to teach their children in public school classrooms and what their attitudes toward student teachers were. As Borg (1989) pointed out, attitude and perception scales are direct self-reporting measures and are subject to the respondent's perceptions of norms and conditions and; therefore, are not always indicative of true attitudes and subsequent behavior. Responses to the 28 items were arranged along a five point Likert Scale from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5).

The survey items used here, originally developed by Erwin (1983), deal with perceptions and attitudes of parents. The questionnaire was pilot tested for validity through the use of a panel

of experts consisting of supervising and cooperating trenchers, administrators, learners, parents, and student teachers. Selected professional educators also served as judges of validity. The judges' comments concerning suitability of items, clarity, directions, and response were evaluated and incorporated into the final development of the questionnaire. (Erwin, 1983, p. 36) In the 11 townships involved were 11 high schools, 3 middle schools and 14 elementary schools. Out of 39 student teachers' classrooms that participated, 16 were secondary, 3 were middle school and 20 were elementary. Districts chose either to mail the survey or to deliver it to parents by students. Two townships declined not to be included as they were working on curricular issues with parents at the time of the survey.

A total of 482 surveys were mailed to parents via the schools and 362 were delivered to parents by the students. Mailed surveys were to be returned in self-addressed stamped envelopes. Surveys sent via students were to be brought back by students to the school, collected at the office of the school, and picked up from the schools by the researcher. The 482 surveys mailed to parents, 158 were returned (32.7% response rate), the 362 surveys delivered by the students, 173 were returned (47.7% response rate). Overall, of 844 surveys 331 were returned (39% response rate).

Principal component analysis (SAS, 1993) was used to categorize items into 4 factors. Based on the analysis, 4 factors were retained and each factor represent the four questions. Descriptive, ANOVA, and the Student Newman Keules (SNK) means test were used to analyze data. Charts and figures are included in the appendix.

Lessons Learned

This study, which grew out of the concern of Jason's family, investigated the following general questions about the way in which parents perceive student teachers:

- Do parent perceive the presence of a student teacher as a positive influence on the learning experience of their children?
- Do parents perceive student teachers as being properly prepared to teach?

- Do parents view student teachers as positive role models for their children?
- Do parents believe that student teachers have an impact on the attitude and achievement of their children? If so in what ways?

Student teachers influence on learning

In this study, 58.6% of parents indicated that their children talked about student teachers at home. Although parents strongly suggested that student teachers need to communicate better, they also responded favorably to each question (except one) as identified by the indicators (see table 1). As student teachers, first year teachers, or as supervisors of student teachers sitting in the back of the room observing instruction and student behavior, our own experiences indicate to us that school-age children are influenced by many factors related to student teachers.

Further analysis indicates that parents tend to think positively about student teachers. In response to item one, parents suggested that student teachers have been a positive influence on their children's learning experiences. Although the degree of influence was not identified, few of the many significant indicators show positive parent perceptions. Parents (70.8%) suggest that their children liked student teachers; 74% suggest that student teachers have been fair to their children; 66% suggest that student teachers are good role models; and 58.6% suggest that their children talked about student teachers at home. As a result of such positive influence, parents (67.1%) suggested that they would choose to have student teachers in their children's classrooms. Additional analysis also showed significant difference by exposure to more student teachers (2-5 or more student teachers). Learners in elementary grades appeared to talk to parents more than middle and secondary grades. Being informed about student teachers both by their children (learners reporting at home) and the schools had significant positive effect on parents' perceptions. The concern of "too many" student teachers in the classroom, which was discussed at the beginning, seems to have had no effect with this group of parents. Instead, favorable responses about student teachers came from parents whose children were exposed to 2-5 or more student teachers during their school years. The majority of the parents in this survey are not concerned about the potential

TABLE 1

Parents Perceive the Presence of Student Teachers as Positive Influence

VARIABLES	MEAN	MEDIAN	MODE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	CAN NOT JUDGE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
v14 - My child likes having S.T	3.40	4	4	1.80	7.30	20.20	39.90	30.80
v15 - My child is receiving more attention	3.47	3	3	3.60	11.50	38.70	26.30	19.90
v16 - Grades improve with S.T	3.04	3	3	5.00	19.90	51.50	15.10	9.40
v17 - S.T. have been fair to	3.86	4	4	0.90	3.60	21.50	55.90	18.10
v19 - S.T. understand child's need	3.24	3	3	1.50	10.90	57.70	22.40	7.60
v20 - S.T. are good role models	3.79	4	4	1.20	2.40	29.60	48.90	17.80
v21 - Child talks at home about S.T	3.39	4	4	5.40	22.10	13.90	45.60	13.00
v22 - Attitude towards school is better	3.00	3	3	3.30	22.40	52.00	15.40	6.90
v23 - S.T handle classroom discipline	3.35	3	3	2.40	10.90	45.60	31.40	9.70
v24 - Adequate explanation of assignments	3.54	3	3	1.80	3.60	45.90	36.30	12.40
v25 - My child learns as much with student teachers	3.38	3	4	3.60	12.70	35.60	37.80	10.30
v26 - S.T. have communicated with me about my child	2.38	2	2	21.80	44.40	13.90	13.60	6.30
v28 - I choose to have S.T	3.75	4	4	4.80	7.90	20.20	42.00	25.10
n=331								

9.

9A

negative impact of *too many* student teachers, as reported by Quintavaro (1989).

Student teachers preparation to teach

Year after year, colleges and universities send student teachers to practice teaching in a regular classroom setting. As a result, thousands of school-age children are likely to be affected in some way by various experiences of practicing student teachers. Experience tells us that after 3 1/2 years of college, student teachers are ready and prepared to respond to the challenges of the classroom. When the question of student teacher preparation was presented to parents, they responded favorably to the four indicators, suggesting that they perceive student teachers as properly prepared. Eighty percent (80%) of parents indicated that they understand the role of a student teacher in the classroom while almost 60% of parents indicated that they are aware of the preparation involved to train someone to be a teacher. The positive sentiment was expressed as 67.1% of parents indicated that they would certainly choose to have a student teacher in their child's classroom.

This same group of parents who suggested that student teachers are prepared to teach their children shared one area of concern --the lack of communication by the student teachers. While 19.6% said student teachers have communicated, 67% said that the student teachers have not communicated, only 13.9% indicated that they do not have enough information to make a judgment. (See table 2.)

Student teachers as role models

In many of our experiences as supervisors of student teachers and as student teachers ourselves we have observed the lesson that the closer age proximity, the high level of energy and idealism, and status college student of the intern leads school-age child to perceive the student teacher as being more "hip" than the regular teacher and, therefore, more worthy of admiration. If this lesson is generally true, we were curious to determine whether parents saw the preservice teachers as suitable role models for their children. According to the responses, that perception seems to be the case. A substantial majority (66.7%) of parents agreed that student teachers are good role models

TABLE - 2

Parents Perceive Student Teachers as Properly Prepared to Teach Their Children

VARIABLES	MEAN	MEDIAN	MODE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	CAN NOT JUDGE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
v12 - I understand the role of student teahers	3.98	4	4	1.80	4.80	13.00	53.50	26.90
v13 - I am aware of the preparation of S.T.	3.94	4	4	2.10	7.30	17.50	39.90	33.20
v26 - S. T. have communicated with me about my child	2.38	2	2	21.80	44.40	13.90	13.60	6.30
v28 - I choose to have S. T.	3.75	4	4	4.80	7.90	20.20	42.00	25.10

n = 331

for their children. This response, however, seems due more to some generalized image or assumption than to specific student teacher actions or attitudes. As was noted previously, most parents indicated that they had little communication with student teachers and seldom saw them at school functions. In lieu of the apparent lack of corroboration from other items on the survey, although 72.2% of parents indicated that they know and are aware of the preparation involved to train someone to be a teacher, one likely explanation for parents positive perception may be that the parents assume that any young person who respects learning, has stayed in school, and is giving their time to other people is a better role model than many other people their children will see outside of school. (See table 3.)

Influence on the attitude and achievement of learners

In this study of parents' perception of student teachers, we had hoped that other variables such as role model, student teacher influence and preparation would significantly load to this one factor, but they did not. Interestingly enough, parents surveyed appeared to suggest that grades are good indicators for their children's achievement in the classroom. Parents' responses to the indicator however, were not favorable. Overall, 53.2% of the parents surveyed indicated they could not judge whether the student teacher graded more stringently than the regular teacher while only 26% indicated that their child is not graded more stringently by the student teacher. In addition, analysis of variance showed significant difference ($p<.05$) by gender of pupil. In this case, boys talking to parents about grade related situations at home appeared to have a greater affect on parents' perception for this variable. With respect to relationship, analysis of variance showed significant difference indicating greater mean for guardian among other categories. The fact that there was only one variable (unlike the others) loading significantly to one factor leaves this question open. (See table 4.)

Conclusion

Parents' perceptions of this group of student teachers were positive as highlighted by the

TABLE - 3

Parents Perceive Student Teachers as Effective Role Model

v27 - I notice S.T at	MEAN	MEDIAN	MODE	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	CAN NOT JUDGE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
v13 - I am aware of the preparation of S.T	3.94	4.00	4.00	2.10	7.30	17.50	39.90	33.20
v26 - S.T have communicated with me about my child	2.38	2.00	2.00	21.80	44.40	13.90	13.60	6.30
v27 - I notice S.T at school functions	3.21	3.00	3.00	7.60	14.50	39.00	27.20	11.80

n = 331

TABLE - 4

Parents Perceive Student Teachers as Impacting on the Attitude and Achievement of their Children

VARIABLES	MEAN	MEDIAN	MODE	STRONGLY AGREE	DISAGREE	CAN NOT JUDGE	AGREE	STRONGLY DISAGREE
v18 - S.T. grade my child harder	2.80	3.00	3	6.60	26.00	53.20	9.10	5.10
n = 331								

indicators and parents ratings of them. Parents appear to suggest that the student teachers are positively influencing their children's learning experiences. Parents also perceive student teachers as properly prepared to teach their children. Responses suggest that they understand the role of the student teachers and are aware of their preparation and as a result, almost 68% suggested they would choose student teachers if they had a choice. Furthermore, parents perceive student teachers as positive role models. Parents' responses indicated that it was not ONLY how one is prepared to teach, but to be at student functions where parents are also present that might have affect on their perception. The student teachers' preparation, student teachers' communication with parents, and student teachers' presence at school functions were the key variables for this objective.

Although parents think that achievement and attitude are directly related to the grade the learner earns, over 50% of them could not decide whether the student teachers influence on their children's achievement. Only a small portion (32%) suggested that students teachers positively influence learners' achievement. This ratio suggests that even though parents indicated that student teachers are fair and respond to the learners needs, they do not have enough information to help them decide if the improvements in achievement and attitude are attributable to the work and efforts of the student teachers. Perhaps parents think that the teacher's (cooperating teacher) responsibility is to assign grades to student work. Perhaps college methods courses need to emphasize how to construct tests, balance assignments, and how to grade them.

This survey supports what the review of literature indicates: That most reports on student achievement related to student teachers are inconclusive. A longitudinal study on the influence of student teachers on learners' achievement as well as including learners such studies might provide other perspectives on the question. We recommend that the issue of communicating with parents be addressed before or during student teachers seminars, that student teachers be encouraged to make phone calls or send letters to parents at least every two grading periods informing them how well their children are performing, that research include surveys of cooperating teachers to gage their perception on the objectives, and that researchers investigate student teachers' perception of self.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Borg, W., and M. Gall. *Education Research: An Introduction*, 5th ed. New York: Longman 1989, 260-313.

Cafee, B. "The Effects of the Student Teaching Experience on Student Teacher Attitudes and Relationships Between Attitudes and Teacher Effectiveness." *Dissertation Abstract International* 40: 1979, No. 799-8444. Sited in W. Williams and J. Graham, "The Relationship Between Supervising Teachers' Personal Attitudes and Professional Background and the Attitude of their Student Teachers." *The Teacher Educator*, 28 (2) 1992.

Conant, J. *The Education of American Teachers*. New York: McGraw Hill 1963, 142.

Denten, J. and S. A. Morris. "Learner Cognitive Attainment: A Basis for Establishing a Student Teacher's Competence." *Texas Tech Journal of Education*, 8: 1981, 45-57.

Dockweiler, C.J. and R. Erion. "The Impact of Student Teaching Experience on Elementary Students." Paper presented at Southwest Educational Research Association, Houston, TX Jan, 1983. Sited in Moris and Pannell, "Parental Opinions About Student Teachers." *Teacher Educator* 23 (2): Autumn 1987.

Erwin, B.K. "The Relationship Between Selected Learner Variables and Instructions by Student Teachers and Reading Achievement on the Texas Assessment of Basic Skills." *Doctoral Record of Study*, Texas A & M University, 1983. Sited in Morris and Pannell, "Parental Opinions About Student Teachers." *Teacher Educator* 23 (2): Autumn 1987.

Franklin-Panek, C.E. "A Self-Selection Process for Student Teachers: A Value Clarification Approach." *Education*, 109 (1), 1988.

Fransworth, B.J. and I. M. Garcia. "The Effect of Student Teachers on Achievement Scores." *College Student Journal*, 14 (3): 1980

Hicks, P. "Changing the Role of the Cooperating Teacher." *The Journal of Teacher Education* 20

(2): 1969.

Karmos, A. and C. Jocko. "The Role of significant Others During the Student Teaching Experience." Research in Teacher Education 28 (5): 1977

Lortie, D. C. *School Teacher: A Sociological Study*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975.

Moffett, G.M. "Use of Instructional Objectives in the supervision of Student Teachers." Doctoral Dissertation, University of California at Los Angeles, 1969. Sited in Morris and Pannell, "Parental Opinions About Student Teachers." *Teacher Educator* 23 (2): Autumn 1987.

Morris, J.E. and S. K. Pannell. "Parental Opinions About Student Teachers." *Teacher Educator* 23 (2): Autumn 1987.

Paschal, B.and J. Treloar. "A Longitudinal study of Attitude Change in prospective and Beginning Elementary School Teachers." Teacher Educator 15 (1): 1979.

Quartavaro, M. "What are the Attitudes of a Group of Parents Towards Dr. Cooperman's proposal of Alternative Certification of Teachers?" April 1984, ERIC ED 271 443.

Turney, C. "The Practicum in Teacher Education: Research, Practice Supervision." Sydney, Australia: University of Sydney Press, 1982, 42. Sited in W. Williams and J. Graham, "The Relationship Between Supervising Teachers' Personal Attitudes and Professional Background and the Attitude of their Student Teachers." *The Teacher Educator*, 28 (2) 1992.

Williams, W. and J. Graham. "The Relationship Between Supervising Teachers' Personal Attitudes and Professional Background and the Attitude of their Student Teachers." *The Teacher Educator*, 28 (2) 1992.